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ABSTRACT

The Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP), a holistic school improvement plan currently operating in selected New York City schools, is explained in this guide. The handbook is divided into three sections. Section 1 discusses the goals of the CSIP, which are to enable the principal to become a more effective instructional leader of the school, and to involve the whole community in making its school more effective. The process equips community members with the skills to: analyze data; work collaboratively and reach decisions by consensus; formulate solutions, set goals, and implement plan activities; conduct effective meetings; resolve conflict; and evaluate plan effectiveness. Section 2 outlines the CSIP model and describes the program's eight phases, which are: (1) program entry; (2) schoolwide needs assessment; (3) planning committee formation; (4) review and summary of needs assessment; (5) development of CSIP; (6) plan implementation (monitoring and formative evaluation); (7) summative evaluation, revision, and refinement; and (8) process maintenance and institutionalization. Section 3 contains 11 appendices which outline roles and responsibilities of various program participants; provide recommendations for implementation and evaluation; and present a tool for keeping track of the disposition of agenda items. An 11-item bibliography is included. (KH)

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NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Office of the Chief Executive for Instruction

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

CSIP HANDBOOK

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

SECOND EDITION
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Anthony Spina, Assistant Director
Comprehensive School Improvement Program

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Special thanks to Heidi Dien Ludwig and Martin Weissman for compiling and editing the contents of this handbook.

Shirley Ford
Assistant Administrative Superintendent
Comprehensive School Improvement Program

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INTRODUCTION

Recent reports urging educational reform have prompted many State Departments of Education, Boards of Education, and schools to develop plans, programs, and processes to improve student achievement and attendance, and to enrich the quality of school life for students and staff.

Policies have been initiated to increase requirements for graduation, to set minimum achievement standards in basic skills, and to revise curricula.

Schools have charted different courses to improve student achievement and attendance. Some schools have concentrated on strengthening staff skills; others have focused on curriculum development; still others have directed their attention toward school climate. Each of these directions is necessary but not sufficient.

In order to maximize the opportunities for students to improve their achievement and attendance, it is essential that school improvement plans adopt a holistic approach. These plans must focus on:

- the teaching/learning process;
- the teaching/learning environment;
- developing professional skills;
- involving students, parents, staff, and administrators.

The Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP), operating in selected New York City schools, uses this holistic method.

This handbook serves as a guide for superintendents, principals, assistant principals, staff, parents, and students who are interested in a goal-centered and system-centered approach to education.

The handbook is divided into three sections. Section I discusses the importance of the comprehensive school improvement process. Section II describes the comprehensive school improvement model. Section III contains appendices which include recommendations, guidelines, and other information that supports the planning process.

I. The Importance of the Comprehensive School Improvement Process

II. The Comprehensive School Improvement Program

III. Appendices

All inquiries should be directed to:

Dr. Shirley Ford, Director
Comprehensive School Improvement Program
High School for the Humanities
351 West 18th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Room 236

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

There are many good and some excellent schools in urban areas. Other schools, however, are in need of renewal, revitalization, and/or redesign. Effective principals develop plans yearly to improve pupil performance. The Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP) supports this planning process; it enables the principal to become a more effective instructional leader of the school.

Many school programs originated in places other than in schools. Some programs emanated from the Federal Government, others from the State Education Department, and still others from district or central headquarters. CSIP allows schools to develop improvement plans at the local school level, ensuring that each plan fits the unique needs of each school.

Studies of effective schools indicate that when planning is a collaborative effort, the school community develops ownership of the plan and is committed to its implementation. Members of the school community develop the belief that SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.

School-based planning promotes a sense of organizational continuity that encourages students, parents, staff, and administrators to develop school improvement plans which focus on the differences between the way things are and the way things should be in order to attain common goals and objectives.

The involvement of the school community in a clearly articulated mission to increase school effectiveness has many positive outcomes. Collaborative planning leads to increased achievement and accomplishment, greater role satisfaction, and broadened opportunities to share experiences and test new ideas. Participation in the Comprehensive School Improvement Program reduces isolation and promotes high morale.

The comprehensive school improvement process equips members of the school community with skills to:

- analyze data;
- sense problems;
- work in a collaborative manner;
- reach group decisions by consensus;
- set goals and objectives;
- formulate solutions;
- implement plan activities;
- conduct effective meetings;
- be productive team members;
- resolve conflict;
- evaluate plan effectiveness.

These skills enable school-based planners to be effective change agents.

II. THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CSIP)

The Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP) is a model for school-based planning that is implemented in a systematic eight-step sequence. Staff developers are assigned to participating schools to work closely with the superintendent's liaison and with the school community to develop a plan to improve students' basic skills, attendance, and the quality of life of students and staff. The eight phases of the program are:

1. Program Entry;
2. Schoolwide Needs Assessment;
3. Planning Committee Formation;
4. Review and Summary of Needs Assessment;
5. Development of Comprehensive School Improvement Plan;
6. Plan Implementation (Monitoring and Formative Evaluation);
7. Summative Evaluation, Revision, and Refinement;
8. Process Maintenance and Institutionalization.

An illustration of the eight phases of the comprehensive school improvement process appears on page 10.

1. PROGRAM ENTRY

CSIP is introduced to students, parents, and staff by the principal. The staff developer establishes a working relationship with the school community, discusses planning committee formation, defines the roles and responsibilities of committee members, and encourages school commitment to the comprehensive school improvement process and plan.

2. SCHOOLWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the needs assessment is to determine the strengths and areas in need of improvement in each school. There are three parts to the needs assessment:

Comprehensive Assessment Report (CAR) - The CAR consists of a three year assessment of student reading, writing, and math achievement based on the results of the New York State Testing Programs (PEP, PCT, RCT). This data, along with dropout rates and attendance figures, will be prepared annually by the New York State Department of Education.

Perceived Needs - School community members (students, parents, staff, and administrators) complete questionnaires focusing on components of effective schools. Data obtained from these questionnaires provides an initial working document for plan development. Research has shown that schools function optimally when the following ten components are addressed:

- Academic goals;
- Clearly defined curricula;
- Monitoring of pupil progress;
- Teacher effectiveness;
- Administrative leadership;
- Rewards and incentives for students and teachers;

- Maintenance of order and discipline;
- Opportunities for student responsibility and participation;
- Parent and community involvement;
- Positive school climate.

Professional Development - Surveys are distributed to determine needs and interests of students, parents, staff, and administrators. Appropriate workshops and experiences are planned with the staff developer, superintendent's liaison, and members of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction to enable members of the school community to function more effectively in their respective roles.

3. PLANNING COMMITTEE FORMATION

The process used to form the committee varies from school to school. The formation procedures must be viewed as fair, and the resulting committee as truly representative. Planning committee participants should be selected by constituent groups. The planning committee includes:

- students;
- parent association members;
- UFT representative;
- instructional staff representative of various grade levels, programs, and departments;
- support and auxiliary staff;
- assistant principal(s);
- principal;
- staff developer.

The planning committee, guided by the leadership of the chairperson, reviews and summarizes all parts of the needs assessment.

Roles and responsibilities of committee participants are delineated in Appendices A - H.

4. REVIEW AND SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The planning committee, through shared decision-making strategies, is responsible for establishing priorities based on data from the needs assessment. Committee members divide into sub-committees to focus on identified problems, to set timelines for activities, and to poll their constituencies to determine the order in which these priorities will be addressed.

Decision sheets are used to document all planning sessions. For further information about decision sheets, refer to Appendix K.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The committee is responsible for developing a written school improvement plan. Plan development occurs at committee meetings and sub-committee meetings. The staff developer guides the committees through this stage of the process. Each committee should have a chairperson to ensure that planning is ongoing and that timelines are met.

The plan identifies needs, goals, objectives, and activities. Each objective is listed and must include a statement of need based on the CAR (hard data), the perceived needs (soft data), and/or the professional development needs of the school community. The plan also defines who is responsible for implementation, the resources needed, the timeframe for activities, and the evaluation criteria used to assess the effectiveness of these activities.

Thorough planning, ongoing monitoring, and timely intervention instill a sense of responsibility in committee members. School-based planning is indeed a team effort.

6. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Plan implementation is coordinated and monitored by the principal and the committee with the assistance of the staff developer and the superintendent's liaison. Plan activities are carried out from the proposed solution through evaluation.

Formative evaluation and professional development experiences are ongoing elements of plan implementation. Tips for Implementation and Evaluation are included in Appendix I.

7. PLAN EVALUATION AND REVISION

Summative, end-of-year, measurements are written into the CSIP plan to evaluate the progress of each plan objective. Evaluation criteria include: pre/post test outcomes, questionnaire responses, direct observations, and/or documentation approved by the principal.

Based on hard data and feedback from the school community, the committee reviews and revises the plan for the next school year. Students, parents, staff, and administrators are informed of all outcomes.

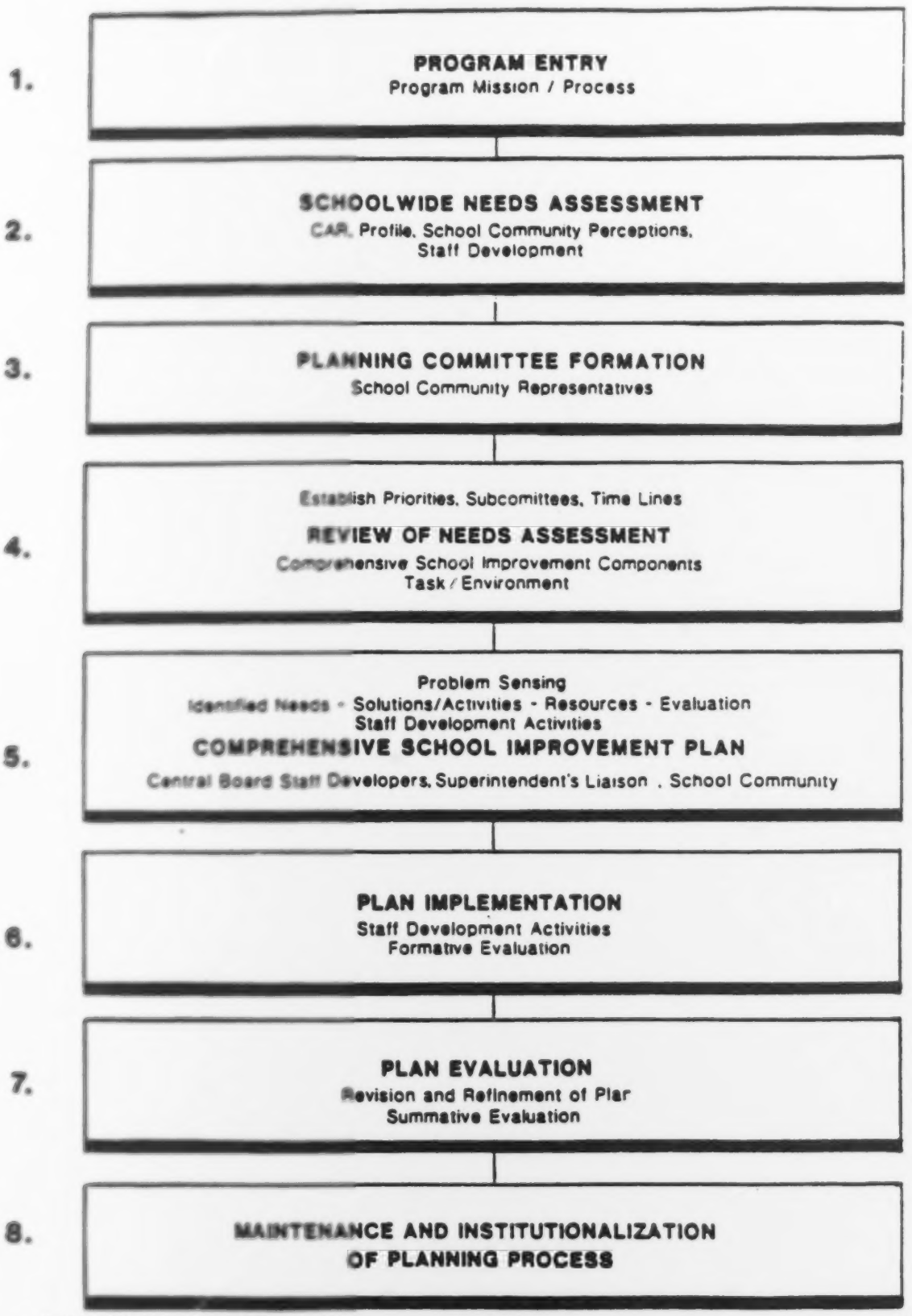
8. MAINTENANCE AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The purpose of the Comprehensive School Improvement Program is to facilitate the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan. Written policies introduced in the plan are communicated to and implemented by all members of the school community. The principal is responsible for ensuring that all policies are operational.

The recommendations outlined in Appendix J contain suggested strategies for dealing with obstacles which may confront the introduction and implementation of school-based planning.

Ultimately, it is hoped that each school will perpetuate the cycle of planning, implementation, and self-evaluation without the assistance of a staff developer.

PHASES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS



APPENDIX A

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE

The responsibilities of the comprehensive school improvement planning committee are to:

- Analyze the needs assessment data;
- Assess areas of strength and areas in need of improvement;
- Determine priorities to be addressed by the committee and school community;
- Formulate the written plan for improvement;
- Recommend the allocation of instructional, administrative, financial, and personnel resources within the school;
- Communicate to the staff developer the need for additional instructional and advisory resources;
- Set timelines for the implementation of plan activities;
- Participate in ongoing formative evaluation;
- Revise and refine plan components as needed.

APPENDIX B

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBER

The roles and responsibilities of the committee member are to:

- Read decision sheet from previous meeting;
- Note problems/issues you want placed on the agenda and submit them to the recorder prior to the next meeting;
- Arrive on time for committee and sub-committee meetings;
- Express opinions and feelings honestly and clearly;
- Ask for clarification when you do not understand something;
- Take responsibility for doing things which will help the group function effectively--IT IS YOUR MEETING;
- Protect the rights of others to have their opinions and/or feelings heard;
- Encourage silent members to speak up;
- Listen attentively to others;
- Think creatively about solutions that might resolve conflicts;
- Take notes during the meeting and maintain a list of items you agree to do after the meeting;
- Network committee activities and decisions to your constituents;
- Share with the committee feedback/suggestions you obtained from your constituents;
- At times, ask yourself, "Right now, what would help this group move ahead and get this problem solved? What contribution can I make to facilitate the group process?"

APPENDIX C

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STAFF DEVELOPER

The roles and responsibilities of the staff developer are to:

- Assist the school in the formation of a comprehensive school improvement committee;
- Provide training to committees on group processes, decision-making skills, and plan writing;
- Facilitate effective plan development;
- Coordinate with the superintendent's liaison the resources necessary (consultants/materials) to implement plan components;
- Assist the committees in analyzing the needs assessment data;
- Support the committee in the development and evaluation of plan activities;
- Conduct workshops for students, parents, staff, and administrators;
- Consult with teachers regarding curriculum planning, methods of instruction, classroom management, and record-keeping;
- Work with the Division of Curriculum and Instruction in the preparation and delivery of workshops;
- Ensure that sub-committee work is completed;
- Work with support and auxiliary staff;
- Hold regular meetings with principals, superintendents' liaisons, and superintendents to discuss the progress of the comprehensive school improvement process;
- Coordinate the mission of CSIP with other school-based programs.

APPENDIX D

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISTRICT AND HIGH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

The roles and responsibilities of the district and high school superintendent are to:

- Select a liaison to work with staff developer(s);
- Provide support services, such as technical assistance in conducting professional development workshops;
- Provide space and other accommodations for district-wide and borough-wide training sessions;
- Provide space and other accommodations for staff developer(s);
- Provide opportunities for principals and staff to participate in CSIP workshops;
- Meet with principals, liaison, and staff developer(s) on a periodic basis;
- Review for approval comprehensive school improvement plans.

APPENDIX E

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT'S LIAISON

The roles and responsibilities of the superintendent's liaison are to:

- Coordinate the comprehensive school improvement effort throughout the district/borough;
- Consult with staff developer on a periodic basis;
- Provide support services, such as technical assistance in conducting professional development workshops;
- Coordinate district resources/services to facilitate plan implementation;
- Meet regularly with superintendent and principals to support school-based planning process;
- Assist schools in plan development;
- Conduct workshops for students, parents, staff, and administrators.

APPENDIX F

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

The roles and responsibilities of the principal are to:

- Demonstrate support of committee members and activities by publicizing and attending all committee meetings;
- Develop procedures to have decision sheets, agendas, and newsletters typed and distributed;
- Monitor plan implementation;
- Ensure timely completion of all tasks;
- Schedule weekly meetings with chairperson and recorder;
- Adjust master schedule to accommodate common periods for sub-committee meetings;
- Use faculty/department/grade/cabinet meetings to broaden schoolwide planning, participation, and input;
- Reward and recognize school community members who actively contribute to plan formulation and implementation;
- Provide physical accommodations for the staff developer;
- Remember, THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN IS A MAJOR SCHOOLWIDE GOAL.

APPENDIX G

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

The roles and responsibilities of the committee chairperson are to:

- Formulate the meeting agenda in concert with the principal, staff developer, and subcommittee chairpersons;
- Allocate a specific amount of time for each agenda item;
- Provide time at the beginning of each meeting for agenda building so that emerging concerns can be addressed;
- Notify committee members of meeting time and place;
- Lead the group to establish priorities among items on the agenda;
- Keep the group on task;
- Facilitate discussion;
- Be attuned to feelings of confusion and conflict in the group;
- Clarify group decisions;
- Conduct a debriefing session during the last ten minutes of the meeting to summarize outcomes and allow members to express their feelings about the effectiveness of the meeting;
- Maintain a record of all meetings and decisions;
- Coordinate sub-committee activities with sub-committee chairpersons;
- Announce date/time/place of sub-committee meetings;
- Consult with staff developer regarding any problems or concerns.

APPENDIX H

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RECORDER

The roles and responsibilities of the recorder are to:

- Review agenda and decision sheet with the principal and chairperson;
- Document CSIP meetings by recording: place, date, time, and attendees;
- Introduce new members or guests at each meeting;
- Record decisions made, understandings achieved, and/or actions to be taken;
- Record who is responsible for actions and when they are to be taken;
- Meet with the chairperson to check the clarity and completeness of the decision sheet prior to typing and duplication;
- Arrange for typing, duplication, and transmission of agendas and decision sheets to the committee members;
- Post decision sheet and upcoming agenda on CSIP bulletin board;
- Maintain a file to document all committee and sub-committee meetings.

APPENDIX I

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Now that there is a clear idea of what is to be achieved and a CSIP plan for achieving it, the implementation stage necessitates persistence. To this end one should:

- Set timelines and deadlines that are realistic;
- Integrate the work to be done into the day-to-day flow of school activities to prevent disruption of regular school operations;
- Pace plan activities to enhance, not impede, the implementation process;
- Select implementation activities which are consistent with the school's resources and the philosophy of the district or borough office;
- Conduct ongoing evaluations so that necessary plan revisions are made in a timely manner;
- Remember, CHANGING ACTIVITIES IN THE PLAN IS NOT A SIGN OF FAILURE.

APPENDIX J

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

- Orient the school community to the dynamics of school-based planning prior to committee formation;
- Increase the number of participants in the planning process by encouraging broad participation in sub-committee meetings;
- Establish a climate conducive to change by visibly demonstrating support of the CSIP process in your school;
- Foster an atmosphere of trust and security at committee meetings so members know that their opinions, ideas, and contributions are valued;
- Make sure that committee members understand their roles and responsibilities;
- Provide a mechanism for open communication among the principal, the committee, and the school community;
- Maintain visible bulletin board space in the main office with current information on the progress of the planning committees;
- Create incentives for and give recognition to planning committee members;
- Recruit student and parent participation;
- Support professional development activities;
- Involve school community in designing a system to monitor and evaluate the success of the CSIP plan activities.

APPENDIX K

THE DECISION SHEET AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

The decision sheet is a tool which is used to keep track of the disposition of agenda items. It is recommended that the chairperson and the recorder use the decision sheet to summarize the actions taken and the decisions reached at each meeting.

The decision sheet is typed, duplicated, and disseminated to all members of the committee and is used by committee members to network outcomes of the meeting to their constituencies.

Establish definite procedures to facilitate dissemination.

Guidelines For Use of the Decision Sheet

Include the following information on the decision sheet:

- School/District/Borough;
- Date;
- Session Number;
- Names of the principal, chairperson, recorder, superintendent's liaison, staff developer, attendees, and absentees;
- Issues or items discussed - include points raised and decisions reached, who is responsible for action, and when the task will be acted upon;
- Date/time/place of next CSIP meeting.

Attach a copy of the agenda.

A sample decision sheet appears on the next page.

Session # ____Boro/Dist. _____

SCHOOL_____

PRINCIPAL_____

CHAIRPERSON_____

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

DECISION SHEET

STAFF DEVELOPER_____

DATE_____

SUPERINTENDENT LIAISON_____

RECORDER_____

ATTENDEES:

ABSENTEES:

WHAT	WHO	WHEN

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